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C U R R I C U L U M D E V E L O P M E N T

for

ALBERTA EDUCATION

[redacted]

Prepared by the
Curriculum Branch
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(Organization Charts updated
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1. LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Statutory Provision: The School Act, 1970

12. (2) The Minister may

(a) Prescribe

(i) Courses of study or pupil programs or both,

and

(ii) Instruction materials,

and

(b) Approve any course of study or pupil program submitted to him by a board, but instruction in the course of study or pupil program shall not commence without the prior approval of the Minister in writing.

And the Regulations Act does not apply to anything done by the Minister or a board under this subsection.

13. The Minister may in his discretion delegate all or any of his powers under Section 12 to a board with or without restrictions.

1.2 Regulatory Provisions: Alberta Regulation 224/75

Regulations delegating powers to school boards for the selection of instructional materials, delegated under Section 13 above.

1. In this regulation "Act" means The School Act.

2. A board may prescribe instructional materials in addition to, or in substitution for, those instructional materials prescribed for use under section 12, subsection (2), clause (a), subclause (11) of the act.

3. Where a board prescribed instructional materials under section 2, it should do so by resolution of the board.

4. A copy of a resolution made under section 2 shall be sent to the Minister.

1.3 Policy Provisions: Ministerial Order, 1977

Policy statement relative to curriculum development and sections 12 and 13 of the Revised School Act.

(a) As indicated in the revised Act, courses of study will be prescribed. However, the nature of this prescription will tend to be broad* and will consist of statements of minimum content expressed in terms of concepts, processes, experiences or skills. While such courses will form the basis for instruction, it is expected that within the framework of the prescribed courses, many decisions will be made at the district school and classroom level in order to meet the needs of particular groups of students as well as the needs of individual students.

(b) In those cases where the nature of the prescription by the Minister is very broad, such as Group "B" options in the junior high school or special projects in the senior high school, teachers and principals are responsible to the school board through the administration staff for all activities under-taken and for all materials used in carrying forward the course or project.

(c) For the purposes of communication, courses of study are identified by grade level in the elementary and junior high school and by course number for the senior high school. This method of identification does not suggest the grade method of organization has any particular advantage. In fact, school districts and schools are encouraged to develop methods or organization which best meet the needs of their students in terms of continuous development within the constraints of available human, physical and financial resources. At the senior high school level, any departure from the course and variable credit organization must involve some type of credit equivalents in order that the provincial high school diploma might be awarded on some equitable basis.

(d) With respect to section 12 (2) (b) of The School Act, it is expected that requests from school boards to the Minister will involve only those situations where the proposed courses of study or pupil program are substantially or completely different from courses prescribed by the Minister. Requests to the Minister should normally contain:

*In programs approved beginning in 1976-'77 the prescription with respect to objectives and content has become more specific. Consequently the local option for interpretation has been reduced.

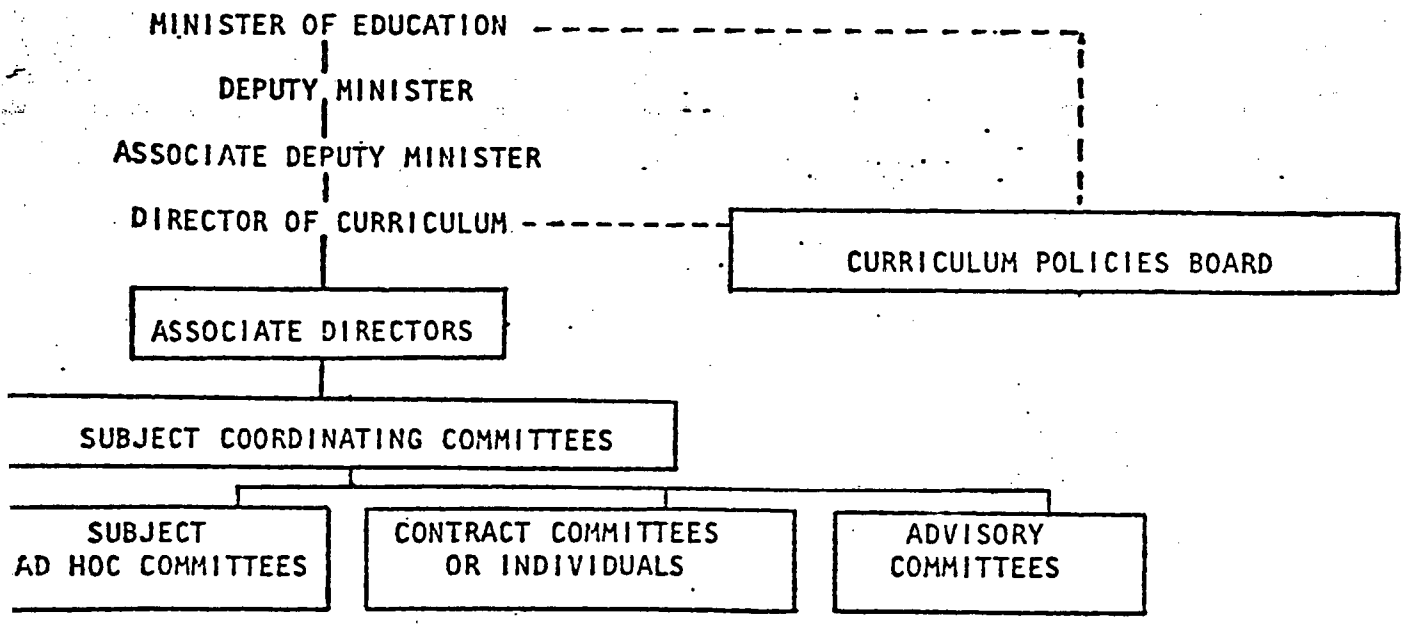
(i) the objectives of the course or program
(ii) the course outline stated in terms of concepts, processes, experiences or skills
(iii) the instructional materials to be used
(iv) the prospective enrolment
(v) special facilities or equipment necessary to offer the course or program
(vi) proposals for evaluation of the course or program

2. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

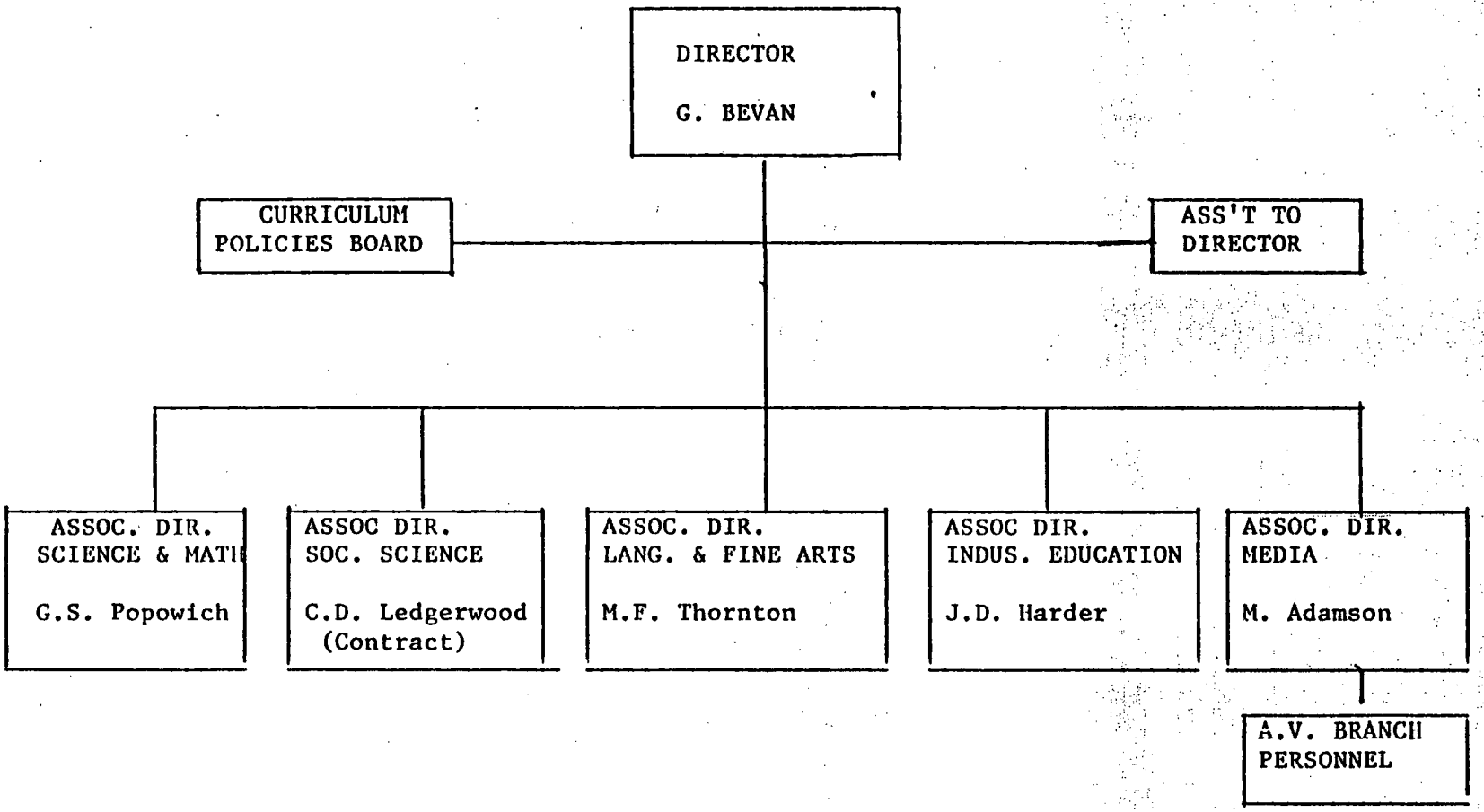
2.1 Departmental Structure

The structure used is a network of levels of decision-making based on the premise that those with legitimate interests should have a voice when significant decisions are being made.

The three-tiered structure for curriculum development.

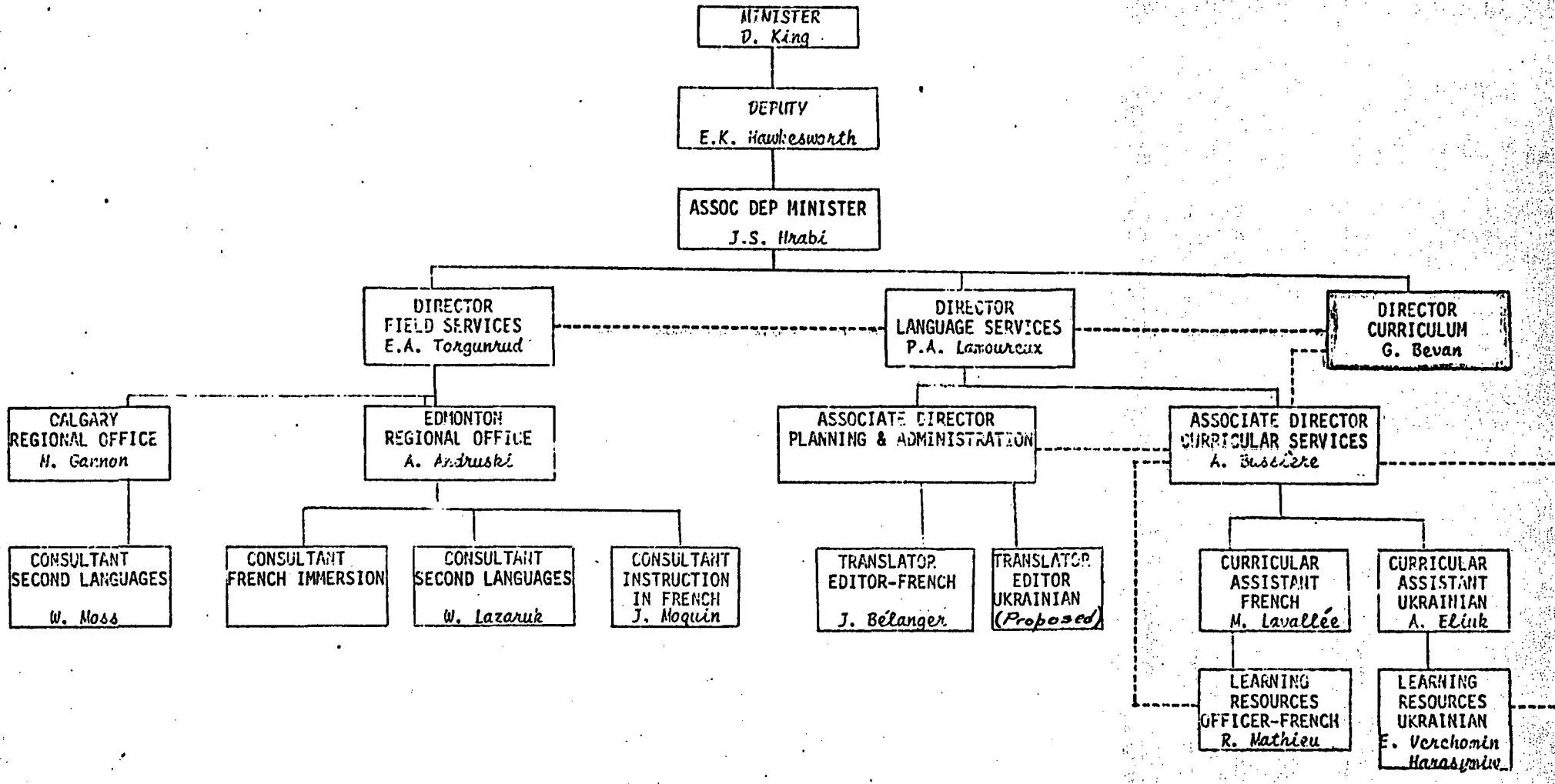


CURRICULUM BRANCH STRUCTURE



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE LANGUAGE SERVICES BRANCH, ALBERTA EDUCATION

October 1, 1979



2.3 Curriculum Branch: Purposes and Functions

2.3.1 PURPOSE OF THE BRANCH

Review, develop and diffuse programs of study, and the related regulations, guidelines and learning resources, for the adoption as provided for under Sections 12 and 150 of The School Act

Assist in coordinating the services of the branch with the services of other branches, departments, governments and other agencies.

2.3.2 OBJECTIVES FOR THE CURRICULUM BRANCH

2.3.2.1 To review, develop and diffuse programs of study, related regulations and guidelines for basic education.

2.3.2.2 To identify, acquire, develop, produce and distribute, for purposes of implementation, support materials for the programs of study.

2.3.2.3 To advise regarding models for review, development, diffusion and adoption of programs of study.

2.3.2.4 To provide support services to the branch functions by way of utilization of personnel, provision of facilities, common services and consultation.

2.3.2.5 To coordinate the services of this branch with the services of other branches, departments, governments, agencies and individuals with corresponding educational interests.

2.3.3 STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

2.3.3.1 Communicate and liaise with professional groups such as university professors, specialist councils and other professional association members.

2.3.3.2 Communicate and liaise with teachers, school administrators and boards, other departments of this and other provinces, as well as with federal departments, along with individuals, groups or agencies with special interests.

2.3.3.3 Consult relative to evaluation projects related to the curriculum and to program development programs, non-branch in origin.

2.3.3.4 Conduct special assignments delegated by the Minister of Education or by senior officials of the department.

2.3.3.5 Provide administrative and support services for the branch and the Department of Education.

Each staff member has a specific area of program responsibility around which the common responsibilities cited above revolve. Reviewing, developing and disseminating programs of study and the related regulations, guidelines and learning resources for adoption, as provided for under Section 12 of The School Act, are continuing mandates for each staff member.

2.4 The Curriculum Policies Board

2.4.1 FUNCTIONS

The Curriculum Policies Board shall deal with broad policies relating to the curriculum for grades 1-XII in the province of Alberta. The board shall recommend to the minister policies concerning procedures and programming.

2.4.1.1 Procedures

The board shall formulate recommended policies and by-laws concerning matters such as:

a) The structure, functions and procedures of a network for curriculum development, curriculum implementation and related matters;

b) Procedures for receiving, appraising and forwarding to the Minister of Education, with recommendations for approval or non-approval, policies which are submitted for the board's consideration by other elements in the curriculum decion-making network;

c) The frequency, location and format of board meetings;

2.4.1.2 *Programming*

The board shall formulate recommended policies concerning:

a) The goals of education for children in grades 1-X11 in the province of Alberta;

b) The content (I.E., concepts, skills and values to be used in educating children in grades 1-X11 in the province of Alberta.

c) The organization of Alberta curriculum for grades 1-X11;

d) The teaching/learning resources to be used in connection with the Alberta curriculum for grades 1-X11;

e) The evaluation of programs that comprise the Alberta curriculum for grades 1-X11;

f) Such other matters as may be referred to the board by the Minister of Education.

2.5 Policy Directions for CPB

2.5.1 Increased specificity and sequencing of the knowledge, skills and attitudes, primarily in a mandatory core, but also in electives is expected.

2.5.2 Communicability and communication of that mandatory core to the public is required.

2.5.3 Program approvals shall be for a time certain having regard for the scope and sequence across a complete phase of basic education.

2.5.4 Periodic achievement testing, with regional norming, is required for mandatory core components at specified grade levels.

2.5.5 Approval of course(s) to be accompanied by support for in-service commensurate with teacher needs.

2.5.6 Direct communication of approved courses, including a program of studies statement, is forwarded to the teacher education institutions in this province.

2.6 Curriculum Decision-Making in Alberta

Coordinating Committee Functions

In most cases these committees have specific subject or combination of subjects responsibility from grades 1-X11. Their mandates are charted by the Curriculum Policies Board and involve:

2.6.1 Assessing the individual and societal needs with respect to the area of study;

2.6.2 Determining the primary and secondary responsibility of the area with respect to the basic goals of education;

2.6.3 Defining the general objectives for the area of study;

2.6.4 Identifying the content (major knowledge, skills and values) to be dealt with in the area of study;

2.6.5 Recommending the learning resources to accompany the area of study;

2.6.6 Producing service materials to assist implementation of a program of study;

2.6.7 Calculating the cost of implementation with regard to learning resources, facilities and teacher in-service;

2.6.8 Determining the criteria upon which an area of study is to be evaluated.

3. COMMUNICATION, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

3.1 Communication

Communication between those who develop curriculum at the provincial level and those interested in such development, is a problem requiring constant attention. A number of procedures have been established to solve or, at least, alleviate the problem.

3.1.1 One of the significant factors in developing the foregoing structure is to provide opportunity for a wide variety of individuals and groups to play a significant part in curriculum development. The foregoing structure, therefore, is one of the ways in which effective communication has been encouraged and has proven to be successful.

3.1.2 The Curriculum Branch publishes Current Curriculum two times a year. This publication includes:

- details of course changes
- textbook recommendations
- other pertinent material

3.1.3 An annual report of the Curriculum Policies Board is published. This publication is used in communication with public and professional groups, as well as interested individuals.

3.1.4 Curriculum Branch membership on appropriate education committees and boards, as well as extensive consultation with other organizations and universities, leads to communication results not provided for by the preceding channels. Presentations to teachers conferences and workshops are effective at the local and regional levels.

3.1.5 Communication about curriculum development is also carried to teachers and administrators by consultants in the Regional Offices of Education who, through membership on the curriculum committees, or by periodic meetings are kept informed of program developments.

The effectiveness of communication about curriculum developments varies from time to time and from place to place. Only through constant attention are the communication needs adequately met.

3.2 Research

In carrying forward their duties, committees and boards are often confronted with problems which they feel should be researched. Such problems are brought to the attention of the Planning and Research Branch, which may:

3.2.1 Decide the necessary research is within the capability of the Department of Education and act upon it.

3.2.2 Decide the problem might be referred to a special research agency.

3.3.3 Decide the problem should be returned to the board or committee for further examination and perhaps more explicit information.

Other research is done by the curriculum committee itself or it may be contracted to individuals to carry out on a project basis.

3.3 Evaluation

Evaluation of curriculum and of the process of curriculum development must be continuous. Examinations are being prepared, or are prepared by the Department of Education for use in certain subjects at selected levels for both provincial and local purposes. All schools in the province are accredited and the evaluations by these schools are accepted by post-secondary institutions. Examinations are available from the Department of Education for student appeal, for students enrolled in courses other than the regular ones, such as correspondence courses, and for adult students.

Evaluation of curriculum is also carried out by personnel in the Regional Offices of Education. The effectiveness of the school in teaching the various programs of study as well as the potential of the programs as developed are considered in such evaluations. The written reports of these evaluations are available to the Curriculum Branch for consideration and as guides for future action.

Annually, school superintendents are asked to report on certain aspects of curriculum need or adequacy.

Local school systems frequently carry on curriculum evaluation of regular programs and special educational programs.

The teacher in the classroom has the greatest responsibility in evaluating curriculum since she/he is the one who determines what the curriculum, the learning experiences, will be. It is from the teacher that the most important information can come about the effectiveness of curriculum. This point of view is supported by resolutions from the teachers', school trustees, and parent-teachers' organizations.

The process of curriculum development at the provincial level is evaluated through an ongoing informal appraisal of the work carried on by curriculum committees, the effect of that work once it reaches the classroom, and the feedback from teachers, students and parents of the appropriateness of the curriculum.

Evaluations of selected subject areas are designed and conducted jointly by Planning and Research and Curriculum branches.

The ultimate evaluation of all curricula developed by the Department of Education and put into action by the teachers in the classroom is the extent to which the children experiencing such curricula become effective members of our society.